

Babies with Down Syndrome experience special benefits from breastfeeding beyond the many advantages to typical newborns.

- Breast milk provides extra protection against infections and bowel problems, which are more common in babies with Down Syndrome.
- Breastfeeding improves mouth and tongue coordination, giving a child with Down Syndrome a real developmental advantage.
- The act of breastfeeding provides additional stimulation for your baby.
- Breastfeeding promotes closeness between mother and baby, and enhances mothering skills.
- Extra patience and reasonable expectations are critical when breastfeeding a baby with Down Syndrome. Low muscle tone and a weak suck can impede the baby's ability to breastfeed.

HERE ARE A FEW TIPS THAT MAY HELP YOU BREASTFEED YOUR BABY.

- Because babies with Down syndrome are often sleepy and placid, you may need to interest your baby through frequent breastfeedings throughout the day, wake him fully before breastfeeding, or provide extra touch and stimulation to keep him alert.
- Pay extra attention to positioning your baby at your breast. Try to keep your baby's body elevated near your breasts with his ear, shoulder and hip in a straight line and use extra pillows for support.
- If gulping and choking are a problem, try positioning your baby so that his neck and throat are slightly higher than your nipple.
- If poor muscle tone makes it difficult for your baby to latch on well, try supporting your baby's chin and jaw while nursing using the "DanCer Hold." (The name of this position was coined by Sarah Coulter Danner, RN, CPNP, CNM, IBCLC and Ed Cerutti, MD. "Dancer" comes from the first letters of their last names (Dan + Cer).) Hold your baby with the arm opposite the breast you'll be offering. Using the hand on the same side as the breast you are offering, cup your breast with your thumb on one side of the breast, palm beneath, index finger pointing outward, and the other three fingers on the other side of the breast. Use your index finger to support your baby's lower jaw while nursing. As your baby's muscle tone improves through breastfeeding and maturity, he will become able to support himself and breastfeed more effectively.



BOTTLE FEEDING YOUR DOWN'S BABY:

- If you are using a bottle, either for formula or breast milk, make sure the hole in the teat is big enough to allow a good flow, but not too fast or baby will choke. You may also find using a premature teat helps as they are smaller and fit better into a tiny mouth.
- Try rotating the bottle gently while the baby is feeding to help release the vacuum that builds up with sucking.
- Experiment with bottle nipples (there are many different types available) and additives to find the combination that suits your baby.
- There are many different feeding systems on the market, many of which are designed to reduce colic etc. but can lend themselves very well to Down's babies. It is worth looking into these and asking if they have samples or starter kits which may offer better value for money - examples are the Haberman Feeder and the Playtex feeding system.
- Position baby in a stable position while allowing baby's neck to be slightly extended.

